**Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church**

**Adult Faith Formation**

**1, 2, 3 John & Jude**

**Sunday, December 18, 2022**

**Bill Hull**

**Romans 12:9-13, 16a, 18**

**“9Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; 10love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. 12Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. 13Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers... 16Live in harmony with one another....  18If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”**

**“How can the freshness of faith be maintained in and through institutional structures?” – (Gail R. O’Day, Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition (pp. 622-623). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition).**

**Opening Prayer** (Adapted from 1 Thessalonians 5:9-22)

God, our creator, you did not bring us to life on earth so that we would be people of anger and resentment, but rather that we would live with you and each other, assured that we are in Christ saved from our sins. So, awake or asleep, we are to encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing for each of us.

But, your word makes it clear to us that we are also to be challenged and to challenge each other. We are “to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.”  And while doing so, we are to “be at peace among ourselves, not repaying evil for evil, but always seeking to do good to one another and to all.” No matter what our circumstances, we are to “rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is Your will in Christ Jesus for us. We are “not to quench the Spirit, nor despise prophecies, but to test everything, holding fast to what is good, and abstaining from every form of evil.” Grant us, o God, the “energy, intelligence, imagination, and love” to strive toward your will for us and your call on our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

**Context, date, authorship of 1, 2, 3 John**

There is no scholarly consensus regarding the authorship of the three letters of John, with some believing it was written by the disciple John, son of Zebedee, and brother of James, or another early follower of Jesus – John the Elder – who is referenced in 2 and 3 John. Other scholars believe the letters may have been composed by a group of writers. Based on internal evidence, “First John identifies no author at all, and 2 and 3 John identify the author only as “the elder” (Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition (p. 622). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition).

There seems to be a consensus that the letters were written between 95 and 110 CE/AD, and that they were written in Ephesus. It is clear, whoever wrote them and whenever they were written, that these letters were addressing what the author(s) perceived to be a crisis in the worship community. “The Gospel (of John) ... is written to introduce its readers to the story of Jesus so that through the story they can come to believe. Conflict and controversy in the Gospel story is focused on those, in the crowds and among Jesus’ own disciples, who are not persuaded to believe. The epistles (of John), by contrast, are addressed to readers who already believe that Jesus is the Son of God (e.g., 1 John 1:3; 2 John 3). Conflict and controversy in the epistles focus on believers who differ on the correct expressions of faith, in word and deed.” (Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition (p. 622). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition).

Interestingly, among the four books this week there are three of the four one-chapter books in the New Testament, the other being Philemon.

Defaulting to my preferred stance: someone or ones wrote them, they are in the canon, so how do they address us today in our current circumstances?!

“1 John and 2 John challenge those who do not believe that Jesus was fully human (1 John 4:2–3; 2 John 7) and do not practice love toward one another (1 John 2:9–11).

3 John confronts one disruptive church leader [Diotrephes] (vv. 9–10) whose practices violate the centrality of God’s love for proper Christian community.” (Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition (p. 622). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition, underlining added).

**Content/Outline of 1, 2, 3 John** (From the *New Revised Standard Version*):

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1 John**The Word of lifeGod Is LightChrist Our AdvocateA New CommandmentWarning Against AntichristsChildren of GodLove One AnotherTesting The SpiritsGod Is LoveFaith Conquers the WorldTestimony to the Son of GodEpilogue | 1:1-41:5-102:1-62:7-172:18-282:29-3:10 3:11-244:1-64:7-215:1-55:6-125:13-21 | **2 John** SalutationTruth and LoveFinal Greetings | 1:1-3 1:4-111:12-13  | **3 John**SalutationDiotrephes and DemetriusFinal Greetings | 1:11:2-121:13-15 |

It will be helpful for you to watch the overviews of 1, 2, and 3 John at The Bible Project.

Link: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-3-john/>.

Bible Project chart: <https://bibleproject.com/view-resource/263/>

**Context, date, and authorship of Jude (Greek: Judas)**

In the letter, the writer introduces himself as the “brother of James” (Mark 6:30 – “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?” Due to the brevity of personal information in the letter, the author and date are difficult to assess.

**Content/Outline of Jude** (From the *New Revised Standard Version*):

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| **Jude**SalutationThe occasion of the LetterJudgment and False TeachersWarnings and ExhortationsBenediction | 1:1-21:3-41:5-161:17-231:24-25 |

Bible Project Overview of Jude: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/jude/>

Bible Project Chart of Jude: <https://bibleproject.com/view-resource/271/>

**Selected passages to read and reflect on in class**

**1 John 1:1-4**

**1**We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — **2**this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — **3**what we have seen and heard we also declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4**We are writing these things so that ourjoy may be complete.

* What other scriptures come to mind as you read this passage?
* Why might the writer(s) of 1 John have begun the letters in this way?

**1 John 1:5-10; 2:3-6** (See also, 2:7-11; 3:11, 18; 4:7-12)

“**5**This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. **6**If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; **7**but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9**If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.... **2 3**Now by this we may be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. Whoever says, ‘I have come to know him,’ but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; **5**but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk just as he walked.”

* How is God “light,” and how do we “walk in the light”?
* What is your understanding of the love of God reaching perfection in a person (2:5)? And what evidence of that have you observed?
* How do you find it meaningful to “confess” your sins (1:9)?

**2 John 1:4-11; Jude 3-4**

**7**Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist! **8**Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what wehave worked for but may receive a full reward. **9**Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. **10**If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive and welcome this person into your house, **11**for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.... **Jude** **3**Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once and for all handed on to the saints. **4**For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God into debauchery and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

* How would you today understand and apply these warnings about “deceivers” (2 John 1:7) and “intruders.” (Jude 4)?
* 1 John 4:20-21 insists that “those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this; those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.” Do you sense any tension or contradiction between this admonition and the demand to separate ourselves from “deceivers” and “intruders”?
* In worship this morning, Nicole Abdnour uses two passages from Jude that help inform our responses:

Before the sermon: Jude 20-23
20...beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22And have mercy on some who are wavering; 23save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

As the Benediction: Jude 24-25
24Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, 25to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

“These letters use the language of faith and community, honoring human relationships. By contrast, Docetism and Gnosticism “tended to devalue human experience as a sphere where God could be known. God’s revelation was available in the realm of spirit and knowledge, not in the flesh.” (ibid, p. 623).

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Christmas is a celebration of the incarnation – the human birth of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, dwelling among us and calling us to incarnate the good news of God’s love for all persons.

**Closing Prayer** (Selected quotes from 1 John, adapted)

God, you are love, and we love because you first loved us. Modeled on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, our Lord, you call us to love not in word or speech, but in truth and action. In these times of disruption and destruction, you tell us that there is no fear in love, and that perfect love casts out fear. In your Word, you also warn us about those who would disrupt and deny your truths. We need the discernment of the Holy Spirit to guide us through the challenges before us. So, “Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.” We give you thanks for your love, and we commit ourselves anew to follow in the way of Jesus Christ, whose birth we prepare to celebrate. Amen.